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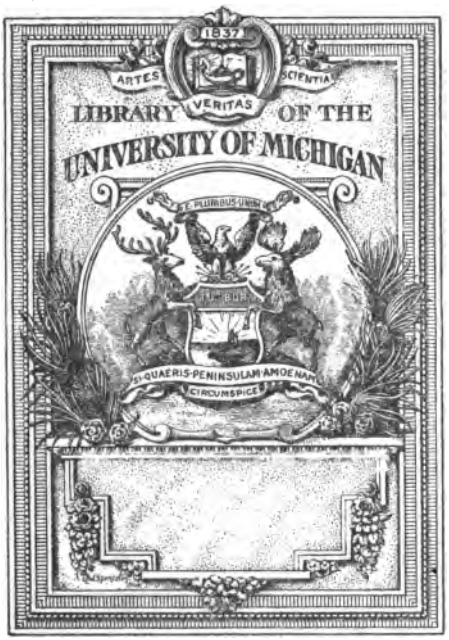
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With the Wild Geese

With the Wild Geese

By Emily Lawless

Author of 'Maelcho' 'With Essex in Ireland'
&c.

With an Introduction by

Stopford A. Brooke M.A.

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Dedication

TO THE ATLANTIC

SPRING stamps her signet on our wayward race,
Hers is the charm, hers the elusive grace,
Immortal, changeful, even as thy face,
King of our hearts.

A deeper glory fills the glad sunshine,
The distance mellows with a hue like wine;
Summer is queen, but Summer too is thine,
King of our hearts.

Now dimly purple pageants fill the eyes,
Far o'er the plain the mocking vapours rise,
Veiled in autumnal mists thy surface lies,
King of our hearts.

And still when cliff, when headland lie a-cold,
And the year's tale of glories is all told,
Still, still thou reignest, even as old,
King of our hearts.

PREFACE

SOME months ago, being in Surrey, I saw, by accident, the privately printed poems which now appear for the first time before the public. Miss Lawless's Irish stories, *Hurrish, a Study*, and *Grania*, had some years before seemed to me to draw nearer to the soul of the West of Ireland than any other books of the kind ; and the historical and imaginative study, *With Essex in Ireland*, was also full of that strange inner life which, below outward appearance, ebbs and flows in the Irish people.

I read these lyrics of the wild Atlantic lands in the least wild of all the shires of England, and, in my sympathy with them, urged Miss Lawless to publish them. After some persuasion, she consented to do this, if I would write a preface to them which should explain certain matters—among the rest the title of

the book—to those English readers to whom Irish History is an unknown wilderness. From this point of view a preface may be of some use to a better understanding of the poems.

The "Wild Geese" was the name given by the romantic and sorrowful imagination of the Irish to the exiles who, like the wild birds and with their wailing cry, migrated to the Continent before and after the Battle of Aughrim, and the Surrender of Limerick in 1691. The Irish officers and soldiers were permitted by the Treaty of Limerick to go where they pleased in ships provided by the English Government. Twenty thousand sorrowing men, and Sarsfield among them, sailed to Brest, and formed the bulk of that Irish Brigade in the Netherlands whose warrior-work was so far-famed. They were only the forerunners of a great exodus of Irishmen flying from the iniquities of the penal laws to give their swords to France, an exodus which lasted fully a hundred years. During the heated wars of that time, from 1691 to

1745, 150,000 Irishmen are said to have died in the service of France alone. Others fought for Spain and Austria.

These were the Wild Geese, and their history is full of romantic episodes. They never lost the love of their country, and the sorrow of the exile was always in their hearts. They never lost their wrath with England, and well they proved it on many a battlefield. They had the careless courage and lived the wild life of men who had nothing to gain and nothing to lose which could be compared with the steady grief which formed the background of their lives—the grief of those who might not land on their native shore. No words that I have read have realised with more insight and sympathy the temper of these daring, high-bred, honourable, reckless and sorrowful men than those with which Miss Lawless has clothed the bitterness of their exile, their passion for fighting, and their longing for their native land.

When we hear of nearly 200,000 men cast out of Ireland and dying in a foreign land and for a foreign cause, we understand the bitter unavailing cry of Ireland in the first poem of this book. Aughrim was the battle fought after the taking of Athlone in 1691. The Irish were defeated on that bloody field by General Ginkle whom William III. had left behind him. Had Sarsfield commanded and not St. Ruth, the French General, it is probable that neither the town nor the battle would have been lost. Immediately after the fight the second siege of Limerick was begun. Both parties were now weary of the war, and Limerick, which in its first siege had forced William to departure after a most heroic defence, surrendered on honourable terms. Then began, as I have said, the great exodus of the Irish,* and *Clare Coast* is the voice

* A brigade of Irish troops had been serving in the French Army before the surrender of Limerick. Sarsfield and his men formed a *New Irish Brigade*, the men who

of a handful of veterans who, sent over to collect money or recruits, are leaving Clare with new exiles for the coast of France. Those who speak are "war-battered dogs," and their cry reveals the temper and the soul of the Irish Brigade. It is close to the reality. *The Choice* has the same fruitful motive, but modified by the singer's love for a woman, and by the offer made to him of high place and prosperity by the Irish Government if he would give up his religion and his patriotism — an offer made to the leaders of the Wild Geese, and rejected by them all. And the second part of the poem records the sick longing he has to see again his land, and his sweetheart whom he has left for ever. It, too, is close to reality.

fought in the Netherlands. In the next war, in the reign of Queen Anne, the Irish forces served in each of the four French Armies in different parts of the Continent. They numbered at least four regiments of Cavalry and seven of Infantry. New exiles kept full the gaps that war had made.

These men fought over a great part of the Continent in the service not only of France but of Austria and Spain. At Versailles, at Madrid, at Vienna, they took high honour and received high command. They fought at Steinkirk, 1692, where the allied forces under William were defeated. They fought at Landen, 1693, and here Sarsfield, one of the leaders of the last charge, heard the Irish regiments cry—as they with the French drove the English in flight across the river Gette—"Remember Limerick." As he lay dying, and saw the blood streaming from his wound, he rose on his arm and cried: "Oh, that this was for Ireland!"

In the new wars which followed the accession of Queen Anne, the Wild Geese increased their honour. Among their exploits was the rescue of Cremona in 1702. Two regiments—Dillon's and Burke's—were part of the garrison. The Duke of Villeroy was the commander, and had brought his army after an unsuccessful fight with Prince Eugene into Cremona. Eugene

planned a surprise; and Villeroy was sleeping when the Imperial Cavalry, the Prince and seven thousand men had reached the great Square. They thought they had the town; but the Irish were awake, and finally, after desperate fighting, beat Eugene's forces out of the place, and saved the Po gate from a fresh reinforcement from without. Their pay was raised, and they received public thanks from the French King.*

In the campaign of 1703 they fought in Italy and on the Rhine, and Nugent's Horse

* Marshal Villeroy, easy man and careless general, did not escape ridicule. He was captured in his night-shirt. Most people know the epigram—

Français, rendez grâce à Bellone.
Votre bonheur est sans égal;
Vous avez conservé Cremone,
Et perdu votre général.

Which Miss Lawless has roughly rendered—

O Frenchmen, give thanks to Bellona.
To you have the Gods been most partial;
You have saved the good town of Cremona,
And happily lost your Field-Marshal.

turned the fortunes of the day at Spires. At Blenheim, in 1704, at Ramilies, in 1706, they did well; they were at Oudenarde and Malplaquet, and when the Treaty of Utrecht ended the war in Flanders, they fought on in Germany and Italy.

It was not only for France the exiles laid down their lives, but for Spain. In the War of the Spanish Succession five Irish regiments were commanded by O'Reillys, O'Haras, Laceys, Wogans and Lawlesses, many of whom were grandees of Spain. At the beginning of the Peninsular War a Blake was in full command of the armies of Spain; and O'Neills, O'Donnells, and O'Reillys were General officers. Many poems lie hid in the doings of these Wild Geese, many a romance.

The last poem which concerns them in this book is *Fontenoy*. The battle of Fontenoy followed that of Dettingen, when, in 1743, the French were terribly beaten by the English and Hanoverians. It was Count Lally of Tollendal,

son of a Sir Gerard Lally of Galway, who rallied the fugitives and saved the retreat; who afterwards served France so well in India, and met so disgraceful a reward. In 1745 Fontenoy avenged the rout of Dettingen. There were certainly three Irish regiments, probably four, on the ground, most of them sons or relatives of Limerick exiles. They fought on the left of the French line, and it was they, and by Lally's advice, who with the King's household cavalry and the regiment of Normandie, drove back the last magnificent and audacious advance of the English column. The Irish dashed into its right flank with the bayonet, shouting "Remember Limerick." The guns shattered its front; the cavalry of the King poured down upon it, and the day was won.

The Irish Brigade suffered sorely. A fourth of its officers, a third of the rank and file, perished; but honours fell thick on the survivors, and the soul of Ireland, in its misery, rejoiced. Miss Lawless paints with her suggestive

pencil the hunger of the men of Clare for battle with their ancient enemy, and for the rocks and fields of Clare unseen since boyhood; and then, with a fine imagination, tells how the dead rose from the field of Fontenoy and sailed all the night through to their beloved country. The fisherman sees them in the early dawn sweeping home to Corca Bascinn, and calls to them. They answer they are coming home, singing with joy. It is nobly conceived, delicately wrought, and goes to the heart of the matter.

The poems on the Desmond War refer to that terrible time, the worst perhaps that Ireland ever saw, when during the Geraldine rebellion between 1579 and 1581 the civil war which had broken out between the Butlers and the FitzGeralds in 1565, one acting with the English and the other with the Irish, was intensified by the great Earl of Desmond joining the Irish. Pelham and Ormonde, the Government commanders, laid the whole of *Munster* under

fire and sword, and hunted the peasants like foxes through the woods and hills. *Leinster* broke also into rebellion, and Lord Grey de Wilton, sent by Elizabeth, left in Ireland, it was said, nothing but carcasses and ashes for the Queen to rule over. *Munster* was made, when the death of Desmond ended the Geraldine rebellion in 1581, an abomination of desolation. "The lowing of a cow or the voice of a ploughman could scarcely be heard from the extreme west of Kerry to Cashel," and Spenser's terrible description of the unutterable misery of the county was the description of an eye-witness. "Out of every corner of the woods and glynnes the people came creeping out on their hands, for their legges could not bear them, and if they found a plot of watercresses or shamrocks there they flocked as to a feast for the time: that in short space of time there was almost no people left, and a most populous and plentifull country suddenly left voide of man and beast." The *Dirge for all Ireland* shapes this bitter and

piteous fate into words worthy of its sorrow, and calls on the pitying rain to hide it. The *Dirge of the Munster Forest* deals with the fact that when the rebellion was over the destruction of the Munster woods was seriously taken in hand, because of the shelter they afforded to the last but one of the Desmonds and to his starving followers ; and it enshrines this menace in a form than which nothing more imaginative can be desired, nothing closer to the Celtic belief of a vast spirit in the forest who feels with all Ireland, and with the dead who died for her.

The rest of the poems are not of Ireland abroad, but of Ireland at home, nor yet of Ireland in the past but in the present. They are rarely touched with hope, and never with gaiety. But they represent well the deep-seated sorrow and love of country which prevails in Ireland below the political squabbles, the religious disturbance, and the battle for the land; and which affects all parties, however

opposed to one another. A true poet sits in the centre of things, among universal emotions.

Now and again, a ray of hope, like storm-sunshine, traverses Miss Lawless' poetry, and is born of her deep desire for happier days; but the clouds, like those that surge up incessantly on Clare from the Atlantic, overwhelm its flying light. And this sadness is deepened in her poetry, as we see in the monologue *Above the Cliff*, by those inward conflicts of to-day which forbid the full consolation of religious peace, and leave its hopes only too like despondencies. This element adds a personal touch of sorrow to the national sorrow of the book. Moreover, being in its personality apart from Ireland, it enables the writer to stand, when she wills, aside from her patriot grief and to see the misfortune of her country from an isolated point of view. And this gives not a less, but a fuller, reality to such tragic poems on Ireland as those written in the Aran Isles. Yet in far the greater part of the

poetry there is no apartness from the pain of her native land. That thrills like a violin cry through all this verse, and is expressed with an originality, a personal intensity, which is not common in modern poetry. Nor is wrath omitted. Sometimes, as in *Looking Eastward*, it is realised with such rudeness of verse and method, broken cries in broken metre, as sorrow naturally has when it is most profound. Reality is a chief element in these poems; boldness, clearness, conciseness of touch, resonant strokes on the centre of things as they are.

Nor is Nature, amid all this humanity, neglected; and it is Nature as she forms herself in Ireland, where she has her own fashion and individuality, as distinct as that of the people whose character she has partly shaped from century to century. It is this distinctiveness of the doings and forms of Nature which, entering into the lives of the dwellers in all nations as a woman into the heart of a man, makes

them, in absence, cry out for their mother-land, and even die, divided from her. The people of all countries feel it, and none more than the Irish. For in Ireland's distinctive scenery of land and sky and ocean, there is an alluring sentiment, a wild variety, an imaginative disposition of cloud, mountain, forest, lake, cliff and western waters, which in their changes, colour, mystery, and appealing, is more unique than any scenery I have ever known. Moreover, a supernatural element always seems to brood over it and in it—a spirit that cannot be put by.

The nearest approach I have met to the striking of this distinct note in the natural scenery of Ireland is in these poems of Miss Lawless, in spite of the fact that the poems are very rarely Nature-poems. The sound of the Atlantic rises and falls through the verse. It is as if one heard the three great waves of Erin breaking round the coast. And the druid-mists come in from the ocean and veil the

land, and are themselves alive with the old Gods. Nor is that nameless supernatural, the remnant of the Pagan Other-world which created the forces of Nature and shaped them into divine and awful Beings, left unrepresented. The whole forest of *Munster* is alive and calls on its indwellers to bury its dead. And the wild and solitary places where the broken Fairy-folk have taken refuge, and though deprived of their power, mourn its passing with thin and bitter crying in the night in the lonely islands out at sea—these too are not forgotten, nor the poet's sympathy with the impotent misery of these dethroned Powers. Every Rath in Ireland has its dark inhabitants, faded descendants of the dreadful Sidhé. Something of their desert grief has entered into this poetry and given it a solitary cry. No English poet could conceive it or attain it.

There are two little pathetic poems, *Honor's Grave* and *The Stranger's Grave*, which illustrate this power of creating the atmosphere, without

any set description, of Irish natural scenery. The first is full of grace and tenderness, and the second of the loneliness of the dead who, having had, like unbaptized children, no Christian rites, lives in the island where he lies and cannot join the happier dead. The sea is round Inishmaan, but is not wilder on stormy nights than his heart who lies entombed in the driving sand. The poem chimes in with the desolate fate of Ireland, herself alive yet buried, with her plotting brain and restless heart; not yet capable of the peace hoped for in the noble lines that end the poem on the tuft of Bog-Cotton, which, seen in the Tyrol, brings the writer home to the grief and charm of her own land. This poem, with *Looking Eastward*, was written in the height of the Home Rule struggle.

The book closes with two poems—*An Appeal* and *A Retort:* of excellent matter and workmanship. Both strike, in contrast with the rest of the poems, the chords of hope, and prophesy the peace and joy which yet may

be in Ireland. The first has great beauty and serious thought, like the imaginations that the voice and vision of the Atlantic bring on a summer day. The second speaks for itself, and it would be well if England, and Ireland also, laid all it means to heart.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

Eastbourne, January 1902.

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WITH THE WILD GEESE

"Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor shall he be seen again in his own country."

AFTER AUGHRIM

She said, "They gave me of their best,
They lived, they gave their lives for me;
I tossed them to the howling waste,
And flung them to the foaming sea."

She said, "I never gave them aught,
Not mine the power, if mine the will;
I let them starve, I let them bleed,—
They bled and starved, and loved me still."

She said, "Ten times they fought for me,
Ten times they strove with might and main,

Ten times I saw them beaten down,
Ten times they rose, and fought again."

She said, " I stayed alone at home,
A dreary woman, grey and cold ;
I never asked them how they fared,
Yet still they loved me as of old."

She said, " I never called them sons,
I almost ceased to breathe their name,
Then caught it echoing down the wind,
Blown backwards from the lips of Fame."

She said, " Not mine, not mine that fame ;
Far over sea, far over land,
Cast forth like rubbish from my shores,
They won it yonder, sword in hand."

She said, "God knows they owe me nought,
I tossed them to the foaming sea,
I tossed them to the howling waste,
Yet still their love comes home to me."

CLARE COAST

Circa 1720

See, cold island, we stand
Here to-night on your shore,
To-night, but never again;
Lingering a moment more.
See, beneath us our boat
Tugs at its tightening chain,
Holds out its sail to the breeze,
Pants to be gone again.
Off then with shouts and mirth,
Off with laughter and jests,
Mirth and song on our lips,
Hearts like lead in our breasts.

Death and the grave behind,
Death and a traitor's bier ;
Honour and fame before,
Why do we linger here ?
Why do we stand and gaze,
Fools, whom fools despise,
Fools untaught by the years,
Fools renounced by the wise ?
Heartsick, a moment more,
Heartsick, sorry, fierce,
Lingering, lingering on,
Dreaming the dreams of yore ;
Dreaming the dreams of our youth,
Dreaming the days when we stood
Joyous, expectant, serene,
Glad, exultant of mood,
Singing with hearts afire,
Singing with joyous strain,

Singing aloud in our pride,
"We shall redeem her again!"
Ah, not to-night that strain,—
Silent to-night we stand,
A scanty, a toil-worn crew,
Strangers, foes in the land!
Gone the light of our youth,
Gone for ever, and gone
Hope with the beautiful eyes,
Who laughed as she lured us on;
Lured us to danger and death,
To honour, perchance to fame,—
Empty fame at the best,
Glory half dimmed with shame.
War-battered dogs are we,
Fighters in every clime,
Fillers of trench and of grave,
Mockers, bemocked by time.

War-dogs, hungry and grey,
Gnawing a naked bone,
Fighters in every clime,
Every cause but our own.

See us, cold isle of our love!
Coldest, saddest of isles—
Cold as the hopes of our youth,
Cold as your own wan smiles.
Coldly your streams outpour,
Each apart on the height,
Trickling, indifferent, slow,
Lost in the hush of the night.
Colder, sadder the clouds,
Comfortless bringers of rain;
Desolate daughters of air,
Sweep o'er your sad grey plain
Hiding the form of your hills,

Hiding your low sand duns ;
But coldest, saddest, oh isle !
Are the homeless hearts of your sons.

Coldest, and saddest there,
In yon sun-lit land of the south,
Where we sicken, and sorrow, and pine,
And the jest flies from mouth to mouth,
And the church bells crash overhead,
And the idle hours flit by,
And the beaded wine-cups clink.
And the sun burns fierce in the sky ;
And your exiles, the merry of heart,
Laugh and boast with the best,—
Boast, and extol their part,
Boast, till some lifted brow,
Crossed with a line severe,
Seems with displeasure to ask,

"Are these loud braggarts we hear,
Are they the sons of the West,
The wept-for, the theme of songs,
The exiled, the injured, the banned,
The men of a thousand wrongs?"

Fool, did you never hear
Of sunshine which broke through rain?
Sunshine which came with storm?
Laughter that rang of pain?
Boastings begotten of grief,
Vauntings to hide a smart,
Braggings with trembling lip,
Tricks of a broken heart?

Sudden some wayward gleam,
Sudden some passing sound,—
The careless splash of an oar,

The idle bark of a hound,
A shadow crossing the sun,
An unknown step in the hall,
A nothing, a folly, a straw !—
Back it returns—all—all !
Back with the rush of a storm,
Back the old anguish and ill,
The sad, green landscape of home,
The small grey house by the hill,
The wide grey shores of the lake,
The low sky, seeming to weave
Its tender pitiful arms
Round the sick lone landscape at eve.
Back with its pains and its wrongs,
Back with its toils and its strife,
Back with its struggle and woe,
Back flows the stream of our life.
Darkened with treason and wrong,

Darkened with anguish and ruth,
Bitter, tumultuous, fierce,
Yet glad in the light of our youth.

So, cold island, we stand
Here to-night on your shore,—
To-night, but never again,
Lingering a moment more.
See, beneath us our boat
Tugs at its tightening chain,
Holds out its sail to the breeze,
Pants to be gone again.
Off then with shouts and mirth,
Off with laughter and jests,
Jests and song on our lips,
Hearts like lead in our breasts.

THE CHOICE

I

I WHO speak to you abide, with my choice on
either side,
With my fortune all to win and all to wear.
Shall I take this proffered gain? Shall I keep
the loss and pain,
With my own to live and bear?

For the choice is open now, I must either stand
or bow,
Secure this beckoning sunshine, or else accept
the rain.

Must be banished with my own, or my race and
faith disown?
Share the loss, or snatch the gain?

Shall I pay the needed toll, just the purchase of
a soul,
Heart and lips, faith and promises to sever?
Six centuries of strain, six centuries of pain,
Six centuries cry, "Never."

Then let who will abide, for me the Fates
decide,
One road, and only one, for me they show.
There is room enough out there, room to pray,
and room to dare,
Room out yonder—and I go!

THE CHOICE

II

Heart of my heart, I sicken to be with you,
Heart of my heart, my only love and care;
Little I'd reck if ill or well you used me,
Heart of my heart, if I were only there.

Heart of my heart, I faint, I pine to see you,
Christ! how I hate this alien sea and shore!
Gaily this night I'd sell my soul to see you,
Heart of my heart—whom I shall see no more.

CREMONA

1702

MIDWINTER and midnight
Was the hour of *that* fight,
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown !)
Every Frenchman soundly sleeping.
"Fortressed cities need no keeping ;
Let the Irish guard the town."

Homesick, sad, and weary,
Heartsick, hungry, dreary,
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown !)

O'Brien, Burke, and Tracy,
Macmahon, Dillon, Lacy,
We watched Cremona town.

"What mean those distant sounds!"
As the famished panther bounds,
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)
So he bounded through the gate.
"Rouse ye, comrades, ye are late!
Prince Eugene has your town!"

The town, but not quite all:
On that furthest western wall
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)
Sat a cheerless, sleepless band,
Far from home, and kith, and land.
"Up, boys, up! Save the town!"

"Down, and fight them in the streets!"
As the Nore the Barrow meets,
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)
So we swept across their track,
Swept across, and hemmed them back
From Cremona town.

"Are ye mad, or in a trance?
Waken, gentlemen of France!"
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)
"See your lilied flags are flapping,
And your Marshal is caught napping
In Cremona town."

Again and yet again,
Though the third of us are slain,
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)

Though Sieur Villeroy is taken,
And the lilied flags are shaken,
Till our tardy comrades waken
We keep the town.

Hither, thither goes the fight,
Through the murk and glare of night.
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown !)
Every exiled son of Clare,
From Kinvarra to Adair,
The whole Brien stock is there,
In the black heart of the town.

"Ha ! they waken up at last !
Hark again, that rallying blast,"
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown !)

"Now charge them with the lance,
Stop the German dogs' advance,
Drive them, gentlemen of France,
From Cremona town."

"Back to back, and face to face,
Wrest from fate this night's disgrace"
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)
Ere the sun rose from its bed
Or that livid dawn grew red
Every German spear had fled
From Cremona town.

So failed Eugene's advance,
So fail all foes of France!
(Shout, boys, Erin's the renown!)

Let her praises still resound,
And while the world goes round
To *their* praise too redound
Who stood the victors crowned
In Cremona town.

AN EXILE'S MOTHER

THERE'S famine in the land, its grip is tightening still,
There's trouble, black and bitter, on every side I glance,
There are dead upon the roadside, and dead upon the hill,
But my Jamie's safe and well away in France,
Happy France,
In the far-off, gay and gallant land of France.

The sea sobs to the grey shore, the grey shore to the sea.
Men meet and greet, and part again as in some evil trance,

There's a bitter blight upon us, as plain as plain can be,
But my Jamie's safe and well away in France,
Happy France,
In the far-off, gay and gallant land of France.

Oh not for all the coinèd gold that ever I could name
Would I bring you back, my Jamie, from your song, and feast, and dance,
Would I bring you to the hunger, the weariness and shame,
Would I bring you back to Clare out of France,
Happy France,
From the far-off, gay and gallant land of France.

I'm no great sleeper now, for the nights are
cruel cold,
And if there be a bit or sup 'tis by some
friendly chance,
But I keep my old heart warm, and I keep my
courage bold
By thinking of my Jamie safe in France,
Happy France,
In the far-off, gay and gallant land of France.

FONTENOY. 1745

I.—*Before the Battle; night*

Oh bad the march, the weary march, beneath
these alien skies,
But good the night, the friendly night, that
soothes our tired eyes.
And bad the war, the tedious war, that keeps us
sweltering here,
But good the hour, the friendly hour, that
brings the battle near.
That brings us on the battle, that summons to
their share
The homeless troops, the banished men, the
exiled sons of Clare.

Oh little Corca Bascinn, the wild, the bleak, the fair!
Oh little stony pastures, whose flowers are sweet, if rare!
Oh rough and rude Atlantic, the thunderous, the wide,
Whose kiss is like a soldier's kiss which will not be denied!
The whole night long we dream of you, and waking think we're there,—
Vain dream, and foolish waking, we never shall see Clare.

The wind is wild to-night, there's battle in the air;
The wind is from the west, and it seems to blow from Clare.

Have you nothing, nothing for us, loud brawler
of the night?
No news to warm our heart-strings, to speed us
through the fight?
In this hollow, star-pricked darkness, as in the
sun's hot glare,
In sun-tide, moon-tide, star-tide, we thirst, we
starve for Clare!

Hark! yonder through the darkness one dis-
tant rat-tat-tat!
The old foe stirs out there, God bless his soul
for that!
The old foe musters strongly, he's coming on at
last,
And Clare's Brigade may claim its own wherever
blows fall fast.

Send us, ye western breezes, our full, our right-
ful share,
For Faith, and Fame, and Honour, and the
ruined hearths of Clare.

FONTENOY. 1745

II.—*After the Battle; early dawn, Clare coast*

"*Mary mother, shield us! Say, what men are ye,*
Sweeping past so swiftly on this morning sea?"
"Without sails or rowlocks merrily we glide
Home to Corca Bascinn on the brimming tide."

"*Jesus save you, gentry! why are ye so white,*
Sitting all so straight and still in this misty light?"
"Nothing ails us, brother; joyous souls are we
Sailing home together, on the morning sea."

"Cousins, friends, and kinsfolk, children of the land,
Here we come together, a merry, rousing band;
Sailing home together from the last great fight,
Home to Clare from Fontenoy, in the morning light.

"Men of Corca Bascinn, men of Clare's Brigade,
Harken, stony hills of Clare, hear the charge we made;
See us come together, singing from the fight,
Home to Corca Bascinn, in the morning light."

THE DESMOND WAR

DIRGE OF THE MUNSTER FOREST. 1581

BRING out the hemlock! bring the funeral yew!
The faithful ivy that doth all enfold;
Heap high the rocks, the patient brown earth strew,
And cover them against the numbing cold.
Marshal my retinue of bird and beast,
Wren, titmouse, robin, birds of every hue;
Let none keep back, no, not the very least,
Nor fox, nor deer, nor tiny nibbling crew,
Only bid one of all my forest clan
Keep far from us on this our funeral day.

On the grey wolf I lay my sovereign ban,
The great grey wolf who scrapes the earth away;
Lest, with hooked claw and furious hunger, he
Lay bare my dead for gloating foes to see—
Lay bare my dead, who died, and died for me.

For I must shortly die as they have died,
And lo! my doom stands yoked and linked with theirs;
The axe is sharpened to cut down my pride:
I pass, I die, and leave no natural heirs.
Soon shall my sylvan coronals be cast;
My hidden sanctuaries, my secret ways,
Naked must stand to the rebellious blast;
No Spring shall quicken what this Autumn slays.
Therefore, while still I keep my russet crown,
I summon all my lieges to the feast.

Hither, ye flutterers! black, or pied, or brown;
Hither, ye furred ones! Hither every beast!
Only to one of all my forest clan
I cry, "Avaunt! Our mourning revels flee!"
On the grey wolf I lay my sovereign ban,
The great grey wolf with scraping claws, lest he
Lay bare my dead for gloating foes to see—
Lay bare my dead, who died, and died for me.

DIRGE FOR ALL IRELAND. 1581

Fall gently, pitying rains! Come slowly,
Spring!
Ah, slower, slower yet! No notes of glee,
No minstrelsy! Nay, not one bird must sing
His challenge to the season. See, oh see!
Lo, where she lies,
Dead with wide-open eyes,
Unsheltered from the skies,
Alone, unmarked, she lies!
Then, sorrow, flow;

And ye, dull hearts, that brook to see her so.
Depart! go! go!
Depart, dull hearts, and leave us to our woe.

Drop, forest, drop your sad accusing tears,
Send your soft rills adown the silent glades,
Where yet the pensive yew its branches rears,
Where yet no axe affronts the decent shades.
Pronounce her bitter woe,
Denounce her furious foe,
Her piteous story show,
That all may know.
Then quickly call
Your young leaves. Bid them from their stations tall
Fall! fall! fall! fall!
Till of their green they weave her funeral pall.

And ye, cold waves, who guard that western
slope,
Show no white crowns. This is no time to
wear
The livery of Hope. We have no hope.
Blackness and leaden greys befit despair
Roll past that open grave,
And let thy billows lave
Her whom they could not save.
Then open wide
Your western arms, to where the rain-clouds
bide,
And hide! hide! hide!
Let none discern the spot where she hath died.

IN THE ARAN ISLES

HONOR'S GRAVE

TENDER soul of womanhood,
All her silent suffering past,
Pious, pitiful, and good,
Safe at last;
Sheltered from the rough wind's blast.

Veiling mists, which come and go,
With transparent fingers mark
Where she lies. Remote and low,
Hark! Oh hark!
What voice whispers through the dark?

Very soundly doth she sleep,
Though around the blown-sand flies,
Though above the storm-clouds sweep
The burdened skies.
She hears nothing where she lies.

Ancient cross, misused and grey,
Ancient cross, with broken arms,
Hold her, shield her night and day,
Safe from harms;
Shield her by thy sovereign charms.

Tiny snail-shells, pencilled, pale,
In the sands about her lie;
Tiny grass-tufts, thin and frail,
Cluster slenderly,
Gather round her tenderly.

Ave Maria ! mother mild,
Mary, unto whom she prayed,
Shield thy loving-hearted child,
Gentle maid !
Shield the spot where she is laid.

THE STRANGER'S GRAVE

In a graveyard upon Inishmaan, dedicated to unbaptized babies, an unknown drowned man lies buried

Little feet too young and soft to walk,
Little lips too young and pure to talk,
Little faded grass-tufts, root and stalk.

I lie alone here, utterly alone,
Amid pure ashes my wild ashes mingle;
A drownèd man, without a name, unknown,
A drifting waif, flung by the drifting shingle.
Oh, plotting brain, and restless heart of mine,
What strange fate brought you to so strange a shrine?

Sometimes a woman comes across the grass,
Bare-footed, with pit-patterings scarcely heard,
Sometimes the grazing cattle slowly pass,
Or on my turf sings loud some mating bird.
Oh, plotting brain, and restless heart of mine,
What strange fate brought *you* to so strange a
shrine ?

Little feet too young ana soft to walk,
Little lips too young and pure to talk,
Little faded grass-tufts, root and stalk.

LOOKING EASTWARD

WRITTEN IN 1885

BLURRED is the arch of sky, mistily grey in the zenith,
Lost and void in the distance, filled with the haze of September.
Few and low gleam the lights, seen through the doors of the cabins,
Small red eyes of flame, set in brown time-wrinkled faces.
Overhead the clouds dart and scatter like sea-birds;
Underfoot, from its caverns, moans and murmurs Atlantic,

Moans and murmurs now, as it murmured and moaned at the dawning.

Eastward to-night I gaze, to where, like a wave grown hard,

Rises a long green ridge, set in the swell of the sea.

Puzzled, unquiet, despondent; wistfully scanning the shadows,

Muffled and lost in their gloom, as my eyes by these veiling vapours.

What are thy destinies, say? what are thy hopes, oh island?

What do the coming years, fraught with unguessable things,

Hold in their swelling bales, Starveling of Fortune, for thee?

Does that implacable star, coldly malignant, remorseless,

Still with its sinister ray beckon thee on to
disaster ?

Breaking the hearts of thy sons, breaking the
hearts of thy lovers ?

Never another land but has gathered some
bountiful harvests.

Never another race but can boast of its moments
of triumph.

Never another shore but some good bark has
attained it,

Laden with spices and ore, laden with silks and
with jewels,

Argosies rich and rare, argosies worth the un-
folding.

Only *thou*, only *thou*, hast reaped no fortunate
harvests;

Only *thou*, only *thou*, hast stood from the dawn
to the gloaming
Holding out empty hands, pleading in vain to
thy God;
Pleading with pitiful eyes, and a face grown
grey with entreaty,
Pressing discomfited lips to the bountiful foun-
tains of mercy,
Brimming, o'erbrimming, for others, parched
and delusive for thee.
Century following century, still at the heels of
the nations;
Poor, divided, derided; a wit-mark, and sport
to the dull.
What, say what hast thou done, land not wanting
in beauty?
What, say what hast thou done, race not want-
ing in spirit?

What antenatal guilt, hid in the womb of creation,
Robbed thee of honour and pelf, robbed thee of peace and of plenty?
Set thee in turbulent seas, hostile to commerce and fortune;
Girded thee in by a race, fortunate truly, and honest,
Noble, and gallant, and free, but narrow and niggard in judgment;
Reared thee a race of thine own, varied in aims as in blood,
Fitted to thrive and combine, forced by implacable fate
Further and further apart, as the years and the decades unroll;
Leaping to greet at a distance; set in the death-grips at home?

Hark, where the angelus sounds from yon little
vapour-veiled chapel,
Sounding the note of peace, sounding the call
to prayer,
Mark how it sweeps and floats, further and
further east,
Carried along and aloft, as if guided and led
through the mists,
Guided by grey-winged seraphs, speeded by all
the saints.
Hast never a saint of thine own, land not want-
ing in sanctity,
Never a saint who can plead in yon cloud-hid
sessions on high—
Standing erect, not crouching; a suitor not to
be daunted,
Urging a manifest plea; claiming a right to be
heard?

Then when the claim *is* made, then when the plea *is* heard,
Sudden, as when some frost breaks, and the world is glad,
Melting the obdurate ice, hard with the frost of the centuries,
Joy the magician appears; streams awaken and sing.
Wakens that land from its sleep, waken its sons from their stupor,
Rubbing astonished eyes, rid of the nightmare of ages.
Brother no longer 'gainst brother, hurting the heart of their mother;
Neighbour no longer 'gainst neighbour, rousing the scorn of the stranger;
Snatching precarious food from mouths already too empty;

Driving precarious gains from shores already too vacant.

Ah, but what of those sessions? Ah, but what of that suitor?

Was there ever so stalwart a saint, ever so dauntless a pleader;

Strong, persistent, resolved, vowed in the end to prevail?

Nay, I know not, I see not; nought see I but the vapours

Rolling eternally in; heavy, tenacious, unkind;

Thicker and thicker still, hiding the land in their clutches,

Wrapping it carefully round, as a corpse is wrapped in its cere-cloth;

Leaving me, feebly lamenting, here in the mist and the darkness,

Staring with purblind eyes; puzzled, unquiet, despondent.

A DREAM

Last night in dreams I seemed to slowly wend
Along a coast like this, all seared and bare,
And met you there, my old, my long-time friend,
And breathed old fragrance lingering in the air.

For near a rock I found a curragh tied,
And, entering, floated down along the bay,
And now and then an idle oar I plied,
Then touched another headland, seared and grey.

There, in a cave, part open to the light,
I found you sitting, smiling, on the strand,
And all my heart sprang upwards at the sight,
And out I leaped, and gaily waved my hand.
"Old friend, what joy to find you here," I said;
Then—all at once remembered you were *dead*.

ABOVE THE CLIFF

A Monologue

You say, Honorius, that this life they led
Here on the last verge of a worn-out world,
A life of adoration and of prayer,
A life outside of life ; a life within
The life to be ; a life whose every breath
Was one continuous supplicating cry
To Him who—be He who He may—they loved,
Proclaimed, feared, worshipped ; this same life, you say,
Was a mere chasing of delusions ; just
A shadow-dance ; a harmless dream in short.

Their hope a dream, their faith a dream, their God
A dream perchance; their saints, in any case,
Good groping creatures, dead and gone to dust,
Used up to furbish fifty other lives,
Each one as dear, or little dear to her,
(The mighty, careless mother of us all,)
As theirs, or any other mortal's life.

Honorius, I am half upon your side,
Seeing that both of us are reared on doubt;
And yet, Honorius,—words are strange—look down,
Can you perceive, far off against the shore,
Where the pale surf just lips the dull green land,

Can you discern a little brownish speck—
A gable end, part of a low brown roof?
Under that low brown roof a woman lies,
And has lain there this five years past or more.
Dying, but very slowly; she may last
Another six months, so her neighbours tell me.
A while since, sitting for a space beside her,
And groping feebly through the forms of speech,
I traversed all the usual platitudes,
Painfully, one by one. Said, She was good;
Said, Patience was a marvellous antidote;
Said, Suffering seemed our common heritage;
And as a last resource, for crowning flatness,
That life was really very, very cruel.
To this she, lifting up her mild grey eyes,
Assented gently. Then as if remorseful,

Or in excuse for one unfairly chidden,
Added in mild apology, "Auch well,
What is it after all, but just a dream?"

Mark that, Honorius! mark, your very word!
A dream! a dream! *she* held it all a dream.
But what? Not *your* dream, nothing less, good friend;
Her dream was now, her certainty to come.
Her waking day lay in the vast Beyond.
She held this poor pretence of yours and mine
At being alive; this thing of walks and talks,
Of sleep, food, play, work, and the rest of it
Not to be reckoned up as life at all,
A thing of nought, and therefore void of blame.

Why blame it, she would say, when all men knew
It had no substance, no reality,
But merely served the purpose of the moment,
And was a sort of mirage of the night,
That night which ushers in the true to-morrow?

Honorius, is she right? or, friend, are you?
Or are you both right? And is *all* a dream?
This ridge on which we sit; those stones about us;
Yon poor rude chapel, battered by the storms;
Restless Atlantic, and his myriad tribes;
And this great cloud-filled arch which covers all.
Are they, you, me, and all our teeming world

Of ships, and men, and fish, and birds, and towns,
A phantom place, in which dim shadows grope,
And meet, or rather make pretence to meet;
And love, and kiss, and mate, and rear their kind,
And yet are nothing, nothing all the time,
But the mere froth and fury of a dream—
A baseless dream, a sordid dream to boot;
Ugly, and mean, confused, and vain, and dull;
In which a crowd of little air-built mimes,
Hate, clutch, and try to wound their fellow mimes,
And wound themselves instead; and utter cries,
And stretch out phantom arms to phantom skies,
And all the while are nothing? Feverish dreams,

The nerve-built puppets of an aguish night,
A goblin brood, mist-born, and fever-hatched,
Within the void of some prodigious brain?

No, no, good comrade mine, by all we love;
By all we are, have been, or hope to be,
Let us fling off such juggling with our wits.
Else see, our feet are here upon the brink,
Our ears are filled with this bewildering surge;
If all are phantoms, then this so-called height,
This twice or thrice a hundred feet of cliff,
Is but one phantom more, and should we cross it
We do but act as some despairing sleeper,
Who, sick of dreams, turns wearily in bed.

Give me your hand, old friend, and hold you mine
Firmly in yours. The path at worst is short,
We will not spoil such shortness, by your leave,
With any such mere pitfalls for our brains,
Such half-sprung air-traps. As the wise man said,
Let us at least pretend that you and I
Exist; have substance. Further, that the rest,
These goodly kindly mortals whom we know,
Are in like case. They *may* be; and if so,
Then are their struggles real. Their pains
Seem true enough, God knows! Real their souls,
Real the God who saves them? He at least
Must know if He be fact or not, or if
Ought be at all. Then when the viewless brink

Is once more reached, by no unfair short-cut,
We may confront that Be or Not to be,
That vast Perhaps, that undeciphered If,
With open eyes, and undiscouraged hearts.
Nay with, who knows? some shadow of that glee,
Fearful, yet not all fearful, with which they,
The first gay bold explorers of our race,
Ignorant mariners, but steadfast souls,
Strode to the beach, unloosed some crazy planks,
And with a brief committal of themselves
To Him who, named or unnamed, still they trusted,
Sailed their frail crafts to find an unknown sea.

FROM THE RATH

I HEARD the sound by snatches through the night.
The wind had risen, and the sea in wrath
Shook the small island to its buttresses.
It was a sound of weeping, strangely clear,
Or more than weeping; one which tore the heart,
And filled the brain, and seemed to still the blood.
A sound of sobs, mingled with half-formed words;
The maddened, feeble, helpless, hopeless cry

Of some tormented creature. And it came
From where, perched on the ridge above my
head,
The rath rose greyly. Nothing living stirred,
Our little sea-girt world was lapped in sleep,
Yet still that cry rose, rose, and rang again,
Lost in the storm, then rising high and shrill,
Thin as some gnat's hum on a summer's noon ;
So clear, so loud, so torturingly shrill,
That Pity's self would fain have struck it
dumb.

I slept, and, dreaming, lost it. Suddenly
It rose again, and shriller than before,
Shrill with the dreadful shrillness of despair.
It seemed the cry of one that knows its doom,
Yet knows not all ; or, shudderingly, fears

Worse than it knows. A horror of the thing
Grew on me as I listened. Next came dawn,
And with the earliest day I climbed the slope,
Passing between tall sentinel rows of stones,
Jaggèd and splintered like some ogre's sword,
And stood within the precincts of the rath.

Even in the eye of day it seemed to hold
Some ghostly adumbration from the night,
Some lurking legacy from dead pagan days,
Bloody, and secret, dark, unnameable,
Branding the spot and its unhallowed stones
As with a martyr's curse. The morning smiled;
Its new-born light spread clean along the ridge,

Still wet with rain, or, slipping down the edge,
Awoke an opal hid at every turn.
And tiny new-born trefoils caught the light
On soft red claws, and tender, green-fringed spears;
And busy emmets drove a bustling trade
About the rude base of an old grey cross,
And the sea smiled its own enchanting smile.

Only for me the night still marred the day;
Only for me some desecrating touch
Lay on the scene. Some sanguinary trail,
Not to be healed by flower, or sun, or sea.
No, nor by cross. Rather it seemed to mock

The Pity which that cross stood surety for.
What? eighteen centuries? a speck! a span!
One streak of light on Time's dark-pillared dome;
One patch of verdure in a desert's glare;
One tear dropped on the heights of Golgotha.

Oh weary human drove, slayers and slain,
What ghostly scroll records your unknown deeds?
What unseen track, thorny, and smeared with blood,
Has felt the tread of your unnumbered feet?
Oh wan-eyed Pity, and ye pitiless Fates,
Thin-lipped, cold-visaged, fed on sighs and groans,

What piteous ghosts attend your shadowy halls,
Or moan in troops beneath your leafless woods?
What full-fed rivers, flushed with countless tears,
Go rolling greyly down your brine-filled coasts?
What gulfs, what tides of mortal agony,
Sleep in the Past, that huge unplumbèd sea?

TO A TUFT OF WHITE BOG-COTTON, GROWING IN THE TYROL

TO A TUFT OF WHITE BOG-COTTON, GROWING IN THE TYROL

WRITTEN IN 1886

AND is it *thou?* small playmate of the fens,
Child of damp haunts, and pallid sea-borne fogs,
Light flutterer over dank and oozy glens,
White-tufted, starry friend of Irish bogs!
What dost *thou*, tossed upon this mountain here,
Flaunting thy white crest in this alien air?
Thy little pennon swelled by this loud breeze

Far out of reach of every low compeer;
Far from thy barren moor lands, waste and bare,
And distant moan of sullen Celtic seas?

Shall brawling torrent, lost to every beam,
White with its spoil of glacier and moraine,
Serve thee as well as some slow-moving stream
Brown with its brimming toll of recent rain,
Yet clear as beads that on mid-ocean float,
And sad as airs which flow from Sorrow's pipe,
Sad as when from green hills one plaintive bleat
Wakens the silence with its homeless note,
And listening plovers wheel, and summer snipe
Fret thy cold shallows with their hovering feet.

Yet ask me not what thy small plumes recall,
Nay, hush ! have pity ! waken not that moan ;
Wake not the dead Past underneath its pall,
Wake not sick Sorrow where she sleeps alone.
For there are fields no sun hath ever blessed,
And there are days whose memory wakes no strain
But the long murmurs of a vanquished host,
For whose return no altar fires are dressed,
And Echo only sends back sobs of pain,
And winds are fraught with sighs of battles lost.

Lost ! lost ! for ever lost ! How sound they sleep,
How sound, dear God, who fought so well in vain !
Little they heed if we their memory keep,

Little they heed, brave hearts, the loss or gain.
For us, and not for them, that past still frowns;
For us, and not for them, its vapours coil;
To us and not to them the shame appears
That heroes fell, yet won no hero crowns,
That blood flowed but to gorge the thankless soil,
And Sorrow's self half blushed to own her tears.

Yet Sorrow still *is* Sorrow. And for this,
For her soft sake who holds us all in thrall,
Whose thin cold cheek e'en kings are bound to kiss,
Who with her quick tear dews the lowliest pall;
For her yon land still keeps its deathless charm,

A hovering charm, faint as lone airs which blow
E'en in the very ear of trancèd death;
So that, however oft we raise that psalm,
Still at the oft-told tale the tear-drops flow,
And listening Pity sighs her tenderest breath.

Then, little plume, uplift thy modest crown,
Nor here alone exalt that snow-white head,
But in yon western land of sad renown,
Whose only wealth is its forgotten dead.
For never Fortune showed one steadfast frown,
Nor ever Loss but hid some secret gain,
Nor Woe but, turning, caught a glad surprise,
Though every tongue conspired to blight renown,
And every memory was fraught with pain,
And every breath defamed those low sweet skies.

For Time is with us. Time who gilds the wheat,
And rounds the year, and stays the raving blast;
Time, o'er whose breast the hurrying moments fleet,
Before whose car all trophies fall at last.
So that at last, across that sad green plain,
Charming all hearts with her enchanted eyes,
Charming e'en memory till its throbbings cease,
Bringing all good things with her in her train,
Soothing the stricken, strengthening the wise,
Slowly comes on the winged form of Peace.

TWO SONGS, AN APPEAL AND A RETORT

"WHEN BEACHED STREAMS"

SONG

When beached streams run thick and slow,
And efts upclimb, with oozy slime,
And only marish blossoms blow,
Then sounds the merry hunting horn.
Blow! blow! the merry hunting horn.

When all the ways are dark and brown,
And not a bird uplifts its strain,
And leaves come circling slowly down,
Then starts the merry hunting train.
Blow! blow! the merry hunting train.

84 "WHEN BEACHED STREAMS"

When rain-drops stand on every ledge,
And all forlorn, the forests mourn,
And daily starker grows the hedge,
Then comes the merry hunting time,
Blow! blow! the merry hunting time.

When Time the gold with grey replaces,
And mocks with scorn the hues of morn,
And thins the long-remembered faces,
Then sounds the merry hunting horn,
Blow! blow! the merry hunting horn.

From *With Essex in Ireland.*

THE CORMORANT

SONG

Now the seagull spreads his wing,
And the puffin seeks the shore,
Home flies every living thing,
Yo, ho! the breakers roar!
Only the Cormorant, dark and sly,
Watches the waves with a sea-green eye.

Under his bows the breakers fleet,
All alone, alone went he;
Flying alone through the blinding sleet,
Flying alone through the raging sea.
Only the Cormorant, dark and sly,
Watches the waves with a sea-green eye.

Round his bark the billows roar,
Dancing along to a lonely grave ;
Death behind, and Death before.
Yo, ho ! the breakers rave !
Only the Cormorant, dark and sly,
Watches the waves with a sea-green eye.

Hark ! the waves on their iron floor,
See Kilstiffin's naked brow !
Iron cliff, and iron shore,
Erin's saints preserve him now !
Only the Cormorant, dark and sly,
Watches the waves with a sea-green eye.

Hark ! was that a drowning cry ?
Erin's saints receive his soul !

Nothing now twixt sea and sky.
Yo, ho! the breakers roll!
Only the Cormorant, dark and sly,
Watches the waves with a sea-green eye.

AN APPEAL

Days of unstinted splendour, days of unceasing rain,
Days all beringed with pleasure, days all be-streaked with pain.
Hark! for I hear them calling, from over the rocks and the sand;
Hark! for I hear them calling, far off in that wild west land;
Up from the hearts of the mountains, cold, ascetic, severe;
Up from the breasts of the streams, brown, be-jewelled, and clear;

Up from thy oozy depths, loud-tongued friend
of the blast,
They rise, they return, they throng; ghosts of
the days that are past.
Past, and dim, not dead, they live, as our lost
ones live,
In our eyes, in our hearts, in our souls, with
all that they had to give,
And the sound of Atlantic pervades them, and
seems in our ears from afar,
Like the sound of *Thy* voice, Oh Eternal, whose
runnels and ripples we are.
Thine were they ere we knew them, giver of
joy and of pain;
Thine those days, not ours; to Thee they re-
turned again.
For what are the drops and the streams to the
infinite sweep of the sea;

And what are our days or our years, Master of Aeons, to Thee?

And the days yet unborn shall be good, and the children shall walk in Thy light:

Say, shall it *not* be so, who bringest the day from the night?

Look! for I see them coming, far over the rocks and the sand;

Look! for I see them coming, away to that wild west land,

Our own west land, which knows us, whose sons and daughters are we,

Waste, untoward to others, dear as a mother to me.

Whose days shall yet be good, whose daughters and sons shall rejoice,

Standing erect and proud, in the old green home of their choice.

So let it be, Oh Lord ; let thy people be glad in
thy light,
Though we, who plead, pass and perish, wind-
blown waifs of a night.

A RETORT

Not hers your vast imperial mart,
Where myriad hopes on fears are hurled,
Where furious rivals meet and part
To woo a world.

Not hers your vast imperial town,
Your mighty mammoth piles of gain,
Your loaded vessels sweeping down
To glut the main.

Unused, unseen, *her* rivers flow,
From mountain tarn to ocean tide;
Wide vacant leagues the sunbeams show,
The rain-clouds hide.

You swept them vacant! Your decree
Bid all her budding commerce cease;
You drove her from your subject sea,
To starve in peace!

Well, be it peace! Resigned they flow,
No laden fleet adown them glides,
But wheeling salmon sometimes show
Their silvered sides.

And sometimes through the long still day
The breeding herons slowly rise,
Lifting grey tranquil wings away,
To tranquil skies.

Stud all your shores with prosperous towns!
Blacken your hill-sides, mile on mile!
Redden with bricks your patient downs!
And proudly smile!

A day will come before you guess,
A day when men, with clearer light,
Will rue that deed beyond redress,
Will loathe that sight.

And, loathing, fly the hateful place,
And, shuddering, quit the hideous thing,
For where unblackened rivers race,
And skylarks sing.

For where, remote from smoke and noise,
Old Leisure sits knee-deep in grass;
Where simple days bring simple joys,
And lovers pass.

I see her in those coming days,
Still young, still gay; her unbound hair
Crowned with a crown of starlike rays,
Serenely fair.

I see an envied haunt of peace,
Calm and untouched ; remote from roar,
Where wearied men may from their burdens cease
On a still shore.

THE END